

# THE OBSERVER

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INSIDE

FIND NEW CHALLENGES AT MODERN BOARD GAME NIGHT IN GO!



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group  
Children swing in unison on a set of swings at Riverside Park on Tuesday, March 29, 2022. The La Grande Parks and Recreation Department has released its master plan detailing all the upgrades it wants to accomplish, including improvements at Riverside Park.

## Planning ahead

### City of La Grande eyes future projects in parks master plan

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — Local authorities have high hopes for the future of La Grande’s parks. After nearly a year of gathering public input, the La Grande Parks and Recreation Department is planning out improvements and new project proposals in its Parks Master Plan.

The layout of future projects serves as a guide for the next five fiscal years, giving the city an outline in place to acquire funds.

“The purpose is mainly to keep us organized and on track as a staff and as a parks and recreation advisory commission, so we have solid goals and objectives to keep things moving,” said Stu Spence, La Grande’s Parks and Recreation director.

The 2022-27 parks master plan is the first of its kind in La Grande, laying out goals and objectives for the parks and recreation department and its advisory commission. With a set of goals and plans that are vetted by local public input and city approval, grant writing and funding will be much smoother for the department in years to come.

Among the variety of projects planned throughout the next five years, the main focus points include connectivity between parks, accessibility for disabled individuals, youth and teen programs, more trails in town and the need for an indoor recreation space.



Strope

“I think they put together a really solid plan that was well-thought-out,” said La Grande City Manager Robert Strope.

An immediate project in the plan is improving the playgrounds at Riverside Park, which is slated for the 2023-24 fiscal year — the projected capital cost estimate is \$125,000. Other proposed projects in La Grande’s parks include adding restrooms at various parks, increasing walkability between parks, improving youth programs and planting more trees and plants.



Spence

#### Public input plays key role

A key part of the formation of the parks master plan was gathering public input, which took place primarily from the summer of 2021 through early spring of 2022.

The Parks and Recreation Department conducted online and paper surveys, gauging needs and wants of the community. The department collected



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Kids enjoy the wooden playground structures at Riverside Park on Tuesday, March 29, 2022. The La Grande Parks and Recreation’s new five-year master plan includes improving the playgrounds at the park.

491 survey responses, 411 of which were marked as residents of La Grande, and throughout the fall of 2021 a number of focus groups.

“We did a series of surveys and focus groups and were able to engage quite a few

community members and determine the priorities of the community,” Spence said.

“I was thrilled with the number of responses we got,” Strope said. “There’s

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## Cold night in the canyon

*Editor’s Note: This is the second of a two-part feature. Part one ran in The Observer in print and online Tuesday, March 29.*

By KATHY ANEY  
East Oregonian

**PILOT ROCK** — Braydon Postma and Cody Watson lay on their backs on a bed of cold river rock on July 1, 2021. Postma had a broken leg, pelvis and arm. Watson’s leg

was shattered.

The two men and their friend Kyler Carter had fallen about 50 feet from a swimming hole above a waterfall and landed in the shallow, rocky creek bed below. As dusk turned to dark, they talked. Their rescue, they realized, was not assured.

Carter, with injuries to his lungs and the loss of his eyeglasses, had gone for help.

“Cody and I didn’t know if Kyler had internal injuries or

something,” Postma said. “As much faith as we had in him to do it, we didn’t know if he’d make it.”

The men, not able to move and separated by the creek, realized their situation was dire. They concentrated on what was important.

“We talked about family,” Postma said. “We said we loved each other. Cody talked a lot about how he loved his

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Mary Otteson/Contributed Photo

Longtime friends, from left, Cody Watson, Braydon Postma and Kyler Carter pose for a photo after Watson and Carter surprised Postma at his boot camp graduation in January 2019.

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#### WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

	<b>Tonight</b> 28 LOW Partly cloudy		<b>Friday</b> 58/35 Milder
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#### CONTACT US

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 Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com.  
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 La Grande, Oregon  
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